Alaska Interagency Coordination Center

AICC **News Release**

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2011 Alaska Fire Season Outlook

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA — What is the 2011 Alaska Fire Season going to be like? No one really knows until it happens but there are several tools available that can provide clues.

The Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC) Predictive Services posts a number of products including two different forecast models available to the public on the AICC Web site at: http://fire.ak.blm.gov/predsvcs/outlooks.php. The Web site is updated as new information becomes available.

New this year is a podcast of the 2011 Alaska Fire Season Outlook. The podcast is in mp4 format and can be viewed and/or listened to online with a properly configured computer at: http://fire.ak.blm.gov/content/weather/camtasia/seasonal%20outlook.html

The podcast file is located at: http://fire.ak.blm.gov/newsroom.php and can be downloaded to a computer by navigating to Interagency Products, right clicking on the 2011 Alaska Fire Season Outlook link and choosing “save target as”.

A smaller PDF version of the seasonal outlook suitable for printing is also available for downloading at: http://fire.ak.blm.gov/content/weather/outlooks/seasonal.pdf.

The AICC Alaska Fire Season Outlook is a forecast of expected fire season activity (normal, below normal, or above normal) constructed for all of Alaska, with focus on key areas that are expected to have increased fire activity during the upcoming season.

Unlike the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment & Policy (ACCAP) forecast located on the same Web page, the AICC forecast is less of a numerical model and more of a human consensus of all the data. Factors may/may not include: teleconnection* data such as El Nino/La Nina and comparison with similar seasons, forecasted temperature and precipitation trends for the summer, areas with drought/flood concerns, and known circumstances prior to freeze-up, amongst other things.

The AICC forecast is published by May 1st each year.

The ACCAP publishes an Alaska Fire Season Forecast, which gives the number of acres expected to burn in the Interior for the season, from the Brooks Range to the Alaska Range, not including the coastline.

The ACCAP forecast is based on the idea that atmospheric circulation patterns influence seasonal temperature and precipitation trends across large parts of Alaska. To build this forecast, historical data is used to “teach” the model.

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Current data from the end of each month is then input to come up with the current season's forecast. Factors include average monthly temperature, total monthly precipitation, and various teleconnection data*, such as the North Pacific Teleconnection.

Details and the latest forecasts can be found at http://www.snap.uaf.edu/fire_prediction_tool/. The forecast is issued just after the beginning of each month. One should be posted soon.

For additional information about AICC Predictive Services, contact Sharon Alden or Heidi Strader at 907-356-5691.

*A teleconnection is a link between two different meteorological or environmental phenomena; for instance, sea surface temperatures in a particular location and their impact on worldwide weather patterns.